

Great Ape Conservation Fund

Throughout West and Central Africa, gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos are being hunted for food. In Southeast Asia, orangutans and gibbons are suffering the same fate. Roads built for logging and mining operations have allowed poachers easy access to previously remote and densely forested ape habitat, which once served as a protective shield against human threat.

The meat of wild animals is commonly known as “bushmeat.” Bushmeat is a cheap and plentiful supply of protein in remote villages where meat from domesticated animals is scarce and expensive. In the city, eating bushmeat has become a status symbol for the wealthy and demand for the taste of wild meat has steadily increased. In many regions, ape meat is the preferred bushmeat and brings the highest price. As a result, the bushmeat trade has

become the number one threat to the survival of apes, pushing many populations to the brink of extinction. Loss of natural habitat and an illegal pet industry also pose serious threats.

In addition to devastating the world’s ape populations, the bushmeat trade poses a tremendous health risk for humans. In Africa, the consumption of bushmeat has been linked to people contracting lethal viruses like *Ebola* and *HIV/AIDS*. Government officials face a daunting challenge in their efforts to inform the public of health risks associated with bushmeat, and to enforce laws that prohibit poaching.

Apes, by their biological nature, are an extremely vulnerable species. They have complex social relationships, grow relatively slowly and have low reproductive rates. Even at a minimal

level, illegal hunting is very damaging to ape populations. In 1960, more than one million chimpanzees populated the dense forests of Africa. Today, fewer than 200,000 survive in the wild and their numbers continue to fall. Experts caution that the loss of ape populations will lead to a loss of critical medical knowledge, which can be obtained through simple, noninvasive research on wild populations.

On behalf of the American people, the U.S. Congress passed a law in 2000 that created the Great Ape Conservation Fund for conservation of gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans and gibbons. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awards grants from the fund for research related to infectious diseases, strengthening law enforcement, public conservation education, safeguarding habitat and much more.

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Mountain gorilla
USFWS/Richard Ruggiero

The 2003 appropriation of \$1.2 million dollars funded 30 projects such as:

- Testing an important aspect of the Ebola outbreak in Gabon and Congo involving gorilla-to-gorilla spread of the disease;
- Implementation of an ape health monitoring program in Gabon to include training for local scientists on monitoring and protection of gorillas, and a public awareness campaign;
- Collaboration between Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo to establish a monitoring and research program to protect the remaining 600 mountain gorillas living in the wild along the Albertine Rift;
- Protecting chimpanzee habitat from logging operations and establishing anti-poaching units in northern Republic of Congo;
- Modernizing a primate research and teaching facility for university students and park rangers in Tanzania;
- An action plan for conservation of the Hainan gibbon in China;
- Coordination of detailed gibbon population surveys and threat assessments with Cambodia’s Department of Forest and Wildlife and Department of Nature Conservation to develop a comprehensive gibbon conservation plan;
- A collaborative workshop to develop a “Regional Action Plan for the Conservation of Chimpanzees in West Africa;”
- Public awareness and children’s educational programs on conservation of chimpanzees and their habitats in Guinea, Mali, Liberia and Ivory Coast;
- Training and equipping anti-poaching units for the conservation of chimpanzees in Sierra Leone;
- Creation of safe corridors between important seasonal feeding areas for chimpanzees in West Africa;
- Introduction of “biogas” as an alternative fuel to firewood in Vietnam in order to prevent the further
- degradation of gibbon habitat due to firewood extraction by villagers;
- Expanding anti-poaching patrol activities and conservation awareness campaigns in areas surrounding Indonesia’s Gunung Palung National Park, which is prime habitat for the 2,500 orangutans living there;
- Awareness camps for people living on the fringes of an important hoolock gibbon habitat, the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary, in India’s northeastern state of Assam;
- A conservation education program for indigenous people that hunt and eat orangutans in areas north and northwest of Lamandau Reserve in Indonesia; and
- Development of a Wildlife Warden Program to assist Malaysia’s Sabah Wildlife Department in their management of the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, an important orangutan habitat.



Lowland gorilla

USFWS/Richard Ruggiero



Chimpanzee

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Orangutan

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Great Ape Conservation Fund from First Appropriation in 2001 through FY 2003	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	163
Total Number of Grants Awarded	75
Percentage of Countries with Great Apes that Receive Grants	72%
Total Amount Appropriated by U.S. Congress	\$2,940,000
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$2,700,000
Total Funds to Administration of Grants	\$240,000
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$4,275,032